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FM REO HILLAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0852
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 0911

C O N F I D E N T I A L HILLAH 000068

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/26/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [SOCI](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: MOSQUES ADDRESS PROVINCIAL IRAQI CONTROL (PIC)

REF: HILLAH 0060

CLASSIFIED BY: Mark G. Davison, Team Leader, Provincial
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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) This is a Najaf PRT cable. Mark G. Davison, Leader.

¶2. (C) In our continuing efforts to monitor Friday prayer sermons through our sources on the ground in Najaf Province (see reftel), this past week's efforts provided contrasting views regarding, among other things, the process of Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC):

KUFA MOSQUE

¶2. (C) On April 20 at Friday prayers at the Kufa Mosque, Sheik Salah Al-Khaqani delivered the sermon. Speaking to some 800 congregants, he made the following points of political interest:

- We condemn the latest attacks against the Sadrists in Baghdad and the deaths of hundreds of innocent people;
- The blame rests with the National Government, itself crippled by the Invasion;
- The current state of affairs will lead the country to a dark end, unless the Invasion ceases;
- The Sadrists must call the Invasion by its name and not allow themselves to be suppressed by the pressures of the provincial and local governments;
- Recall how strong was the voice of the people in Al-Amarah who expelled the British invaders out of Maysan Province (Note: In a ceremony on April 18 in Amarah, the capital of Maysan Province, British forces and the Governor of Maysan signed the documents establishing Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC). End Note).
- Muqtada Al-Sadr honors the patriotic stand of the Sadrists in having called for the six Sadrist ministers to withdraw from the national government.

¶3. (C) According to our source on the ground, the congregants were spanned the ages of 16 to 50. Mahdi militia (JAM) members guarded the Mosque itself.

HUSINIYHIA FATIMIA MOSQUE, NAJAF

¶4. (C) On April 20 at Friday prayers at the Husiniyha Fatimia Mosque, Najaf, Sadr Al-Deen Al-Qubani (SCIRI Affiliation) and made the following points of political interest:

- The National Government must cleanse the Council of Representatives of all those who are Ba'athist followers; the terrorists who collaborate with them and who used their positions of trust, whether members of parliament or from their personal security details, should be executed for the terrorist act that took place at the Parliament itself;

-- While many nations speak only about the so-called Invasion as the sole cause for Iraq's woes, this is an incomplete picture -- the dark side is the pain and suffering of the Iraqi people, but the bright side is the continuous handing over of authority in the provinces, and this indicates that the Invasion will reach an end;
-- To lend further balance to the national picture, there must be both a political agenda and a timetable for the withdrawal of the Invasion forces;
-- Those who point to violence and suffering of Iraqis as the result of conflict between Sunni and Shia are completely mistaken -- it is instead a conflict between Iraqis and foreign extremists. Iraqis, who are the ultimate target of these extremists, will not bend to the will of the terrorists;
-- Neighboring Arab countries desire to restore the Iraqi political map to the days of the Dictator's regime, and to wipe out the four years of material and political progress;
-- Let the Arab foreign ministers come to Najaf, rather than to Sharm el-Sheik in Egypt, and thereby prove to the world that Najaf has progressed to safety and security.

COMMENT

15. (C) While neither preacher invoked the PIC that had already taken place in December, 2006 in Najaf, I find it interesting to note the different interpretations made by the SCIRI and Sadrist camps. While both view PIC as positive, SCIRI is more moderate -- in calling vaguely for a timetable, they recognize the inherent security risks where PIC is implemented too quickly. The Sadrists, on the other hand, label PIC as evidence of domestic insurgent impact. This spin is roundly rejected by Al-Deen Al-Qubanji, who negates them entirely. In either camp, however, it is clear that PIC remains uppermost in mind as the provinces come to terms with the implementation of Coalition policy.

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